



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Over half a million Australian workers are underemployed: ABS

Just over half a million (544,600) workers were ready and willing to work more hours in September 2006, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Underemployed workers are either part-time workers who want (and are available for) more hours of work than they currently have; or full-time workers who worked part-time hours during the reference week for economic reasons.

The vast majority (483,900 or 89%) of underemployed workers were working part-time. They represented 17% of all part-time workers in the labour force.

Most part-time workers did not want to work additional hours and so were not classed as underemployed - 2.3 million of the 2.9 million part-time workers (80%) would not prefer to work more hours.

The underemployment rate (the number of underemployed workers expressed as a percentage of the labour force) was 5.0% at September 2006. When combined with an unemployment rate of 4.8% for the same period, this gives a labour force underutilisation rate of 9.8%. The labour force underutilisation rate has continued to decrease from 12.6% in September 2001 to 9.8% in September 2006.

Other facts about underemployed workers as at September 2006 included:

- The number of underemployed workers fell by 22,000 compared with September 2005.
- Women made up 57% of all underemployed workers.
- Over one-third (36%) of underemployed part-time workers were aged 15-24 years, while less than 10% were aged 55 years and over.
- Male part-time workers were more likely to be underemployed than female part-time workers (22% compared to 14%).
- About six in ten underemployed part-time workers said they would like to work full-time (283,700 people or 59%). Men were more likely to want full-time work (73%) than women (50%).
- More than half (57% or 274,600) of underemployed part-time workers were looking for work with more hours. The most commonly reported main difficulty in finding more work was 'no vacancies in line of work' (20%). Other commonly reported difficulties included 'unsuitable hours' (10%) and 'no vacancies at all' (9%).

Further details can be found in *Underemployed Workers, Australia, September 2006* (cat. no. 6265.0).

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